



A Tradition of Stewardship  
A Commitment to Service

Agenda Date: 9/21/2016

Agenda Placement: 9B

## Napa County Planning Commission Board Agenda Letter

---

**TO:** Napa County Planning Commission

**FROM:** Charlene Gallina for David Morrison - Director  
Planning, Building and Environmental Services

**REPORT BY:** John McDowell, Deputy Planning Director - 299-1354

**SUBJECT:** Ragatz Site Verizon Wireless Use Permit #P16-00193-UP

---

### **RECOMMENDATION**

#### **VERIZON WIRELESS RAGATZ LANE SITE / GTE MOBILNET OF CALIFORNIA - USE PERMIT (#P16-00193-UP)**

**CEQA Status:** Consideration and possible adoption of a Categorical Exemption pursuant to Section 15303 (d) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Class 3, which exempts construction of new small structures or conversion of small structures. The project site is not included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5.

**REQUEST:** Approval to: (1) construct a 65' tall telecommunication facility designed as a faux water tower; (2) install up to twelve (12) panel antennas inside the proposed water tower; (3) install two (2) small GPS antennas at the ground mounted equipment level; and one 24" solid microwave dish on the tower at approximately 45' above final grade; (4) place the tower and associated ground-mounted equipment within a 22' by 22' lease area (approximately 484 square feet) on the southwestern portion of the property; (5) install approximately 200' of overhead line between the proposed facility and the closest existing power pole to the south; and (6) construct a 8' tall wooden fence to screen the ground-mounted equipment; (7) install a 24-hour emergency diesel-powered back-up generator within the fenced lease area; (8) install emergency notification signs on the site; and (9) use existing roadways and parking areas to support the proposed facility. The facility would be located on the far southwest portion of an approximately 36.42-acre site on the east side of Highway 29, at the easterly terminus of Ragatz Lane and east of the intersection of Ragatz Lane and Trubody Lane, within an Agricultural Preserve (AP) zoning district, Assessor's Parcel 036-120-001 at 1181 Ragatz Lane, Napa CA, 94562.

**Staff Recommendation:** Find the project Categorically Exempt and approve the Use Permit subject to recommended conditions.

**Staff Contact:** Jerry Haag, Staff Telecommunication Planning Consultant, 510-644-2105, [jphaag@pacbell.net](mailto:jphaag@pacbell.net); or John McDowell, Deputy Planning Director, 707-299-1354, [john.mcdowell@countyofnapa.org](mailto:john.mcdowell@countyofnapa.org)

**Applicant Contact:** Peter Hilliard, On Air LLC, 707-933-9633, [philliard@onairllc.com](mailto:philliard@onairllc.com)

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Project Actions:**

That the Planning Commission:

1. Find the project Categorically Exempt based on Finding 1 of Attachment A; and
2. Approve Use Permit #P16-00193 based on Findings 2-5 of Attachment A and subject to Conditions of Approval of Attachment B, attached.

### **Discussion:**

The applicant is proposing to construct a new unmanned telecommunication tower for Verizon Wireless on the edge of an existing vineyard. The applicant states that there is currently poor cell coverage along the Highway 29 corridor and the proposed tower would provide improved cell and data coverage for Yountville and portions of the unincorporated County south of Yountville.

The 36.42-acre site is currently occupied by a vineyard with a single family dwelling and agricultural outbuildings generally located north of the proposed cell tower site; however, an uninhabited agricultural accessory building is located immediately north of the proposed tower located on the south west corner of the site. The closest other residence is a single-family dwelling, which exists approximately 1000' southwest of the proposed facility location. The proposed Verizon wireless facility would be located on the southwestern portion of the parcel on the western side of the existing vineyard. Proposed improvements would include a 65' tall tower that would be designed to appear as a water tank. Related project improvements would include ground-mounted equipment adjacent to the tower surrounded by a 8' tall wooden fence, an on-site emergency back up generator and emergency identification signs. Site access would be gained via an existing unpaved road (Ragatz Lane) just to the west of the proposed facility. Adequate space exists near the facility for future truck parking by maintenance personnel. Although the facility is not "co-located" (placement of multiple cell service carriers on a single facility), it could accommodate other carriers, depending on the number of additional antennas proposed.

The project site is flat and no major trees are located near the site. There are three to four existing grape vines. A small intermittent creek runs approximately 30 to 40' north and west of the site. The applicant notes that the height of the tower is dictated by the height of the nearby tree cover on the to the west. The visibility and aesthetic considerations of the proposal is discussed below. The proposed project is consistent with the intent of the General Plan and Napa County Code to make all telecommunication facilities "effectively unnoticeable" from adjacent roads and public gathering places. The project is also consistent with applicable sections of County Conservation Regulations. This is discussed further below.

## **FISCAL IMPACT**

Is there a Fiscal Impact?                      No

## **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

Consideration and possible adoption of a Categorical Exemption pursuant to Section 15303 (d) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Class 3, which exempts construction of new small structures or conversion of small structures. The project site is not included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5.

### **BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION**

**Owner:** Lisa & Joseph Scherer and Marjorie Miller et. al.

**Applicant:** Verizon Wireless

**Applicant Representative:** Peter Hilliard, On Air LLC

**General Plan Land Use Designation:** Agricultural Resource (AR)

**Zoning:** Agricultural Preserve (**AP**)

**Date Filed:** May 8, 2015

**Date Deemed Complete:** June 10, 2016

**Number of Employees:** None, with period visits by maintenance staff

**Lease Equipment Area:** 484 square feet

**Site Access:** From Ragatz Lane, west of the site

**Emergency Power Supply:** On-site generator (24 hr. + power supply)

**Adjacent Zoning/Land Use:**

North & East: AP-single-family residence (122.48-acre parcel)

South: AP-single-family dwelling & vineyard (12.04-acre parcel)

West: AP-single-family residence & vineyard (113.6-acre parcel)

**Discussion Points:**

1) Visual Impacts: The Napa County Code requires telecommunication facilities to be sited and designed so as to blend in with the surrounding environment to be "effectively unnoticeable." Photosimulations supplied by the applicant (see Attachment E) shows that, the proposed facility would be effectively unnoticeable from both Highway 29, the nearest major roadway, since it designed as a water tower. Water towers are common in rural agricultural landscapes and would appear to passers-by as part of a local farm. No other major public gathering places are located near the project site, such as parks, trails or playgrounds. Surrounding properties are all devoted to agriculture. Therefore, the County's aesthetic standard can be met.

2) Conservation Regulations/Creek Protection: The proposed project would not include construction or operational activities within creek setback areas. In this instance, given the flatness of the site (less than 1% slope) a setback of 35 feet from the unnamed creek tributary west of the site is required. The closest point of the proposed telecommunication facility would be a minimum of 40 feet. Therefore, this proposal is consistent with County

conservation requirements.

3) Potential Alternative Sites: The applicant submitted information to the County regarding other potential locations and configurations as alternatives to the current request. This is included as Attachment E. In sum, the applicant notes that several surrounding private property owners near the Ragatz Lane site were contacted to allow a similar facility to be constructed. None expressed interest with the exception of the owner of the property which is the subject of this application.

4) Environmental Analysis: Staff is recommending adoption of a Class 3 Categorical Exemption to address CEQA requirements, which is intended to cover small scale structures where no adverse impacts could occur. In this instance, the project site lies within an agricultural area with no nearby inhabited dwellings (Refer to Attachment C). Documentation has been submitted with the application stating that no significant adverse impacts would result to biological or archeological/cultural resources on or adjacent to the project site. The recommended Conditions of Approval contain a provision to preserve undocumented archeological or cultural resources should they be discovered during project construction. Attachment E includes background biological and cultural resource documentation.

### **Consistency with County Standards**

#### General Plan Compliance

The proposed project is in compliance with Public and Quasi-Public Polices contained in the Land Use Element of the General Plan, which notes that “governmental uses, public uses, and public utility uses shall be permitted in appropriate locations” (Policy 8.10).

#### AP Zoning District Compliance

The proposed project is consistent with the AP zoning district regulations (Section 18.16.030 I) which conditionally permits major telecommunication facilities that do not meet one or more of the performance standards established in Section 18.119.200. In this instance, the proposed height increase of the proposed tower at 65’ would exceed the maximum height of a telecommunication facility that could be administratively approved, which is 35’. The proposed application also includes a request to install overhead wires for a distance of approximately 200’ in lieu of undergrounding to the closest power pole. The nearest pole is located west of the project site near a creek and undergrounding would partially be within the creek setback area and would be in conflict this provision.

All other provisions of the AP district are met, including setbacks.

#### Telecommunication Standards Compliance

Telecommunication facilities in the County are regulated by Chapter 18.119 of the County Code. The proposal, as conditioned will comply with all of the standards set forth in this section, including but not limited to basic tower design, setbacks, identification signs, fire protection and provision of a minimum of 24-hour emergency power supply.

Photosimulations of the proposed facility are shown on Attachment E.

#### Conservation Regulations Compliance

Chapter 18.108 of the Napa County Code establishes provisions for protection of watercourses, hillside areas, riparian habitat and other natural resources. The proposed Verizon telecommunication facility would include a minimum 40’ setback from the adjacent creek and would therefore comply with creek setback requirements as set forth in the Conservation Regulations.

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

- A . Recommended Findings
- B . Recommended Conditions of Approval
- C . CEQA Memorandum
- D . Telecom Site Application Packet
- E . Visual Simulation & Coverage Maps
- F . Graphics

Napa County Planning Commission: Approve

Reviewed By: Charlene Gallina